

This is the golden thread running thru the whole epistle.

Three great truths are prominently set forth in the book—(1) Justification by faith, not by works; (2) Sanctification, or the indwelling of the Spirit; (3) Love toward others.

(1) "The just shall live by faith." 1: 17.

Justification is the act in which God declares a man blameless, innocent. It is free-forgiveness. This is not won by works, but by faith in Christ Jesus. God pardons us and holds us guiltless if we have faith; but not simply because we have faith but because he loves us. With sins pardoned we are thus eligible to the life of the righteous and their reward. The just shall live here happy, comforted, sustained. They shall also live the eternal life with God in "the many mansions."

(2) Sanctification, or progressive justification.

It is God's act in us whereby we are made righteous in ourselves. It is the indwelling of the Holy Spirit which leads to an ever expanding life, an abundant life, an eternal life. "To be spiritually minded is life." The spiritual life alone reaches upward toward the infinitely pure, good and beautiful. The Holy Spirit leads us to bright realms of of spiritual beauty and fullness on earth and is the type and pledge of our dwelling in God's blessed presence in heaven. The realm grows in beauty where spiritual life abounds. What is good for eternal life here after is productive of long, successful, happy life here. "The essence of our being is a breath of heaven. A radiancy of glory illuminates that human temple in which the Holy Spirit dwells."

(3) Love and Service.

In every sacrifice there is a death unto sin out of which there arises a new life of righteousness unto God. The emulation of love is to show the brightest example of kindness. What a beautiful society Paul speaks of! It is not the Utopia of a vain dreamer. It can be realized if we love Christ, for then we will love each other. Love sheds sunshine in its passage thru this cold world. "Let your love be without hypocrisy." "In love of the brethren be tenderly affectioned one to another."

THE URGENT NECESSITY OF STUDYING PROPHECY

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"Despise not prophesyings." 1 Thess. 5: 20.

The above text is also translated upon good authority, "Disregard not prophecies." That there is a wholesale disregard of things spoken by God's prophets, every intelligent man knows. For this, divers excuses are made, not the least of which seems to be, that prophecy was not intended to be understood until after its fulfillment. The second coming of Christ into the world, is, by far, the chiefest theme of the prophets, and a subject mentioned more than any other by

Christ and his apostles,—a subject to which one whole book of twenty-two chapters is entirely devoted, and the only book carrying a promise of special blessing to him who reads. (Rev. 1: 3.) No subject in the Word has the particulars thereof, more minutely described, and yet, recently an esteemed brother wrote, "I do not pretend to know the particulars of Christ's second coming." No, not even to know "but, that when Christ shall come again, he shall reign in the hearts of men all unnoticed by some, because of their gazing into the heavens, looking for him." This sort of a "second coming" is very popular today, but absolutely unscriptural. A thousand scriptures must be spiritualized, allegorized, idealized, until they become a mere jumble in a confused brain, before one can arrive at such a conclusion as this.

"For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, and with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God." (1 Thess. 4: 16.) "The Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels, in flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God." (II. Thess. 1: 7, 8.) "Behold, he cometh with clouds; and every eye shall see him, and they also which pierced him." (Rev. 1: 7.) "And then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn, and they shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory." (Matt. 24: 30.) "Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into heaven? this same Jesus, which is taken up from among you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven." (Acts 1: 11.) How these and hundreds of other scriptures can be interpreted to mean a quiet, gradual, "unnoticed" coming into the heart, merely, by the most subtle "spiritualizer," is incomprehensible to me. That, indeed, would be a cunning "surgical operation."

Another good brother tells a pretty little story,—pretty enough, yes,—but one which shows the havoc being made of the Word by these "spiritualizers." He says, "I once stood by the bedside of a dying young Christian who undoubtedly felt himself flying thru the skies, and with his last breath shouted, 'Up! Up! Up!' As that last exulting shout rang in my ears, I said to myself: 'Caught up to meet the Lord in the air.' Who knows?"

This of course is the old theory that the coming of the Lord, the "blessed hope" of the child of God, is *Death*. But notice the passage to which we are referred in 1 Thess. 4: 16, 17. (We quote the whole.) "For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first; then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air." When this young Christian died did the "dead in Christ" arise? That is, did the first resurrection occur? (1 Cor. 15: 23.) Were *we* which are alive and remain caught up together with *him* to meet the Lord in the air? The fact is, the incident fits the

scripture quoted about as well as a wheelbarrow would fit a railroad track. "Who knows?" I know that death and the second coming of Christ are events separated in the case of many saints, by the centuries; or else the Word of God is a riddle never to be solved but by God himself. We fear our brother has made a shipwreck of a blessed faith by striking upon the rock of "time." God forbid that we should fall into this error not believing the Word which says, "That day and hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels which are in heaven." Let us not pry into a mystery hidden from angels, but cling to that which is *revealed*, only.

It seems that in regard to prophecy at least, some of our good brethren have written over the gateway leading to truth, the motto written over the gateway leading to the famous old mansion of Claas van Olden, "*nil scire tutissima fides*," that is,—to know nothing is the safest belief. Was it this state of affairs that Isaiah foresaw, when he said, "And the vision of all is become unto you as the words of a book that is sealed, which men deliver to one that is learned, saying, Read this, I pray thee: and he saith, I cannot for it is sealed: And the book is delivered to him that is not learned, saying, Read, this I pray thee: and he saith I am not learned." The objections are more of the heart than of the mind. The most "sealed book" in the Bible is yet called, "*The Revelation of Jesus Christ*." (Rev. 1: 1.)

Prophecy is a *revelation* of God's will and purpose. It deals with the deepest and most vital truths of God, and with the highest and noblest things pertaining to the destiny of man. Man marches on, *on*, into the future, and the future is darkness. But God is not crowding him on with his eternal years into the night; but he has given him "A sure word of prophecy; whereunto ye do well to take heed, as unto a light that shineth in a dark place, until the day dawn, and the day star arise in your hearts." (2 Peter 1: 19.)

We contend that there is urgent need that we closely study prophecy today, for the very reason that it is "a light shining in a dark place;" that it is one of the strongest witnesses standing in defense of the Word of God, today. It is a present witness whose testimony is irrefutable. Next to miracles, infidels have most violently assaulted prophecy, and prophecy has often proven to be the stone to grind them to powder. To test and prove prophecy is to put to utter route the enemies of the cross, for it settles to every candid mind, the inspiration of the Bible. "And now I have told you before it come to pass, that when it is come to pass, ye might believe." (John 14: 29.) The strongest argument Jesus could offer in his own behalf to the unbelieving Jews, was, "Search the Scriptures; * * * they are they which testify of me." Frederick, the Great, once asked a scholar if he could produce in a single sentence an unanswerable argument for the Bible. The reply was, "The Jews, your Majesty!" Jerusalem groaning beneath